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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION
WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING
OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

ST. HELENA

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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ST. HELENA 1/

I. GENERAL

1. The Territory of St. Helena, which is administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, consists of the main island of St. Helena and two dependencies: the island of Ascension and a group of islands forming the dependency of Tristan da Cunha.

2. Situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, approximately 1,900 kilometres from Angola and 2,900 kilometres from Brazil, the Territory covers a total land area of 412 square kilometres. Ascension lies 1,200 kilometres to the north-west of St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha and the other small islands forming that dependency are approximately 2,400 kilometres to the south of it. St. Helena, where Jamestown, the capital of the Territory, is located, is the largest island, with an area of 122 square kilometres. It has a tropical climate tempered by trade winds which blow throughout the year.

3. The population of St. Helena, excluding its dependencies, was 5,664 as of February 1987, the date of the last census. According to the information provided by the administering Power, it was 5,644 at the end of 1993. Approximately one third is resident at Jamestown. The next largest communities are situated at Longwood, in the east of the island, and at Half Tree Hollow, in the north-west. The remainder of the population live in small cottage communities or single cottages.

II. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

4. The St. Helena Constitution Order of 1988, which entered into force on 1 January 1989, replaced the Constitution of St. Helena and dependencies introduced on 1 January 1967. Under the new Constitution, the Governor and Commander-in-Chief (who is appointed by the Queen) administers the Government. He is assisted by an Executive Council and a Legislative Council.

5. The Legislative Council for St. Helena consists of the Speaker, three ex officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General) and 12 elected members. The Executive Council is presided over by the Governor and consists of the ex officio members mentioned above and five of the elected members of the Legislative Council. Although a member of both the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, the Attorney General has no vote in either body.

6. Elections are held by secret ballot at intervals of not more than four years by universal adult suffrage for those aged 18 years and older. Although two political parties are nominally in existence, since 1976 they have been inactive and elections have been held on a non-partisan basis.

7. The judicial system, based on the laws of the United Kingdom, is administered by the Supreme Court (there is a non-resident Chief Justice) and a Magistrate's Court presided over by the senior of the three magistrates sitting

at a session. There is also a Juvenile Court and a Small Debts Court. Provision exists for a Court of Appeal, consisting of three judges, which can sit at Jamestown or in London.

8. As reported in the proceedings of the House of Lords on 10 May 1994, the Legislative Council of St. Helena requested a review of the Constitution which would, among other things, consider the inclusion of suitable provisions for a Bill of Rights in the Territory's Constitution. 2/

9. In November 1994, the dependent Territories of the United Kingdom, including St. Helena, established the Dependent Territories Association to provide a forum for discussion and cooperation between them. The Association aims at sharing information on issues of common interest and making recommendations on appropriate courses of action to the member Governments.

III. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. General

10. St. Helena possesses few natural resources. Agriculture, largely of a subsistence nature, is the main economic activity on St. Helena. Food production is insufficient to supply the island's needs, and this, together with the lack of manufacturing industries, results in the importation of the vast majority of its requirements. The cost of living in St. Helena is higher than in the United Kingdom. There is no value added tax.

B. Public finance

11. The main items of estimated revenue, including the British Government grant-in-aid, and expenditure for 1992-1994 were as follows:

(Thousands of St. Helena pounds) a/

Revenue	1992/93	1993/94
Direct taxes	695.5	673.6
Indirect taxes	932.2	1 061.7
Fines, fees and charges	131.5	212.4
Government rents and hires	72.6	132.8
Earnings of the Government	162.3	204.7
Treasury receipts	1 485.2	1 784.2
Other	66.0	3 289.7
Total ordinary revenue	3 545.3	7 359.1
Grant-in-aid	3 526.1	3 495.0
Total	7 071.4	10 854.1
Expenditure		
Government	1 105.9	1 173.3
Finance and development	706.1	852.4
Pensions and gratuities	347.6	347.4
Public education	826.3	826.9
Public health	1 023.9	1 154.7
Social services	946.4	1 044.8
Agriculture and forestry	700.0	827.2
Public works	1 151.4	3 870.3
Other	37.8	39.2
Total	6 845.4	10 136.2

a/ The local currency is the St. Helena pound, which is equivalent to the United Kingdom pound sterling. St. Helena currency notes, introduced in 1976, and the United Kingdom pound sterling are legal tender. The currency in this working paper is presented in St. Helena pounds.

12. The principal forms of taxation are income tax, land tax and withholding tax, which are payable by non-residents on incomes accruing in or deriving from the Territory, at a current rate of 25 per cent. Rates of tax on taxable income after allowed deductions are 10 per cent for the first £2,000 of taxable income, 20 per cent for the next £2,000 of taxable income and 25 per cent thereafter.

13. The Territory's statement of assets and liabilities as of March 1994 was as follows:

(St. Helena pounds)

Liabilities		Assets	
Deposits	2 054 604	Cash held locally by Ascension and Crown Agents, London	3 884 218
Special funds:			
Savings bank	7 916 440	Savings bank	6 867 245
Other funds	226 149	Other funds	226 090
Consolidated Fund	2 134 225	Development Fund	95 963
		Advances	922 898
		Trading account	335 004
Total	12 331 418		12 331 418

C. Development projects

14. The island itself is not economically viable and relies to a great extent on external aid. Aid from the United Kingdom covers budgetary assistance (grant-in-aid, at present on a three-year rolling disbursement programme); development aid projects; technical cooperation; and funds covering the island's shipping losses.

15. The overall development of St. Helena is implemented through an agreed National Development Plan. The current five-year plan is now updated to serve as the basis of the island's continued development until the end of this century. It is aimed at better use of limited national resources, reduced dependence on external aid and the creation of suitable employment opportunities. The Plan is financed mainly through the overseas aid programme of the Government of the United Kingdom. Detailed proposals for individual projects are discussed by the Executive Council in the context of the annual budget (after negotiations between the island Administration and the overseas Development Administration (ODA)), and subsequently ratified at the budget session of the Legislative Council.

16. Development of water supply on the island continued in 1994. In March of that year the first earth dam on St. Helena was completed. The project was funded by ODA, which also provided funds in 1994 for other projects aimed at improving water quality and the investigation of alternative water sources.

17. It is anticipated that United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cooperation would complement that of the major donor country. The second UNDP country programme, which is largely a distillation of the previous programme and the result of continuing dialogue among the Government, ODA and UNDP, will target three areas of concentration, namely, the universal pension scheme, tourist development and the livestock development programme (see A/49/216, sect. II). The latter, valued at US$ 691,000, allows for development of a cattle production system, setting up a nucleus poultry breeding stock, rehabilitation of degraded pasture and slaughterhouse renovations aimed at increasing self-sufficiency for St. Helena. The net indicative planning figure for St. Helena was recommended at $2 million. 3/

18. Apart from UNDP, the only other important donor is the European Union. The European Development Fund financed the reconstruction and rehabilitation of sea defence walls in both James' and Rupert's Bays. The project, which is to be completed in 1995, is aimed at improving sea defences in James' Bay and protecting historic buildings and monuments close to the seafront that form St. Helena's heritage, as well as protecting the Bulk Fuel Installation in Rupert's Bay.

Estimated development aid expenditure, 1991-1994

(Thousands of St. Helena pounds)

	Approved total grant		Expenditure	
Projects	1992/93	1993/94	1992/93	1993/94
Agriculture and forestry	1 672.0	1 452.7	184.3	106.2
Public utilities	4 380.3	3 937.4	1 030.7	662.3
Fisheries	637.3	283.3	122.2	-
Social and administrative services	4 910.0	4 198.6	197.8	122.7
Administrative and miscellaneous services	35.0	50.0	24.4	21.6
Other	243.8	190.0	52.6	163.9
Total	11 878.4	10 112.0	1 612.0	1 076.7

D. Agriculture, land tenure and livestock

19. The total area of the island is 47 square miles, approximately two thirds of which is barren. Estimated figures of categories of land are as follows:

Land use	Hectares	Percentage
Arable	63	0.5
Gardens	328	3.0
Pasture	1 381	11.0
Forest/woodland	720	6.0
Scrub	2 628	21.5
Flax	322	3.0
Cleared flax	86	0.5
Barren	5 550	45.0
Bad land	920	8.0
Urban	220	1.5
Total	12 218	100.0

20. All crops grown on the island are food or fodder crops, but the island is not self-sufficient in these products. The only export crop produced on the island is coffee. During 1993/94 some 1.6 tons of coffee were exported to the United Kingdom. Potatoes are the main carbohydrate staple, although this is greatly supplemented by imported rice. There is no established system of recording quantities of produce sold on the domestic market.

21. Agricultural administration is carried out by the Chief Agricultural and Forestry Officer, who is a member of and responsible to the Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee of the Legislative Council, the body that sets agricultural policy.

22. The Agriculture and Forestry Department provides support services to smallholder producers, including agricultural loans through a revolving credit fund, which provided loans totalling £1,459 in 1993 and £6,393 in 1994. Other loans, such as those for the purchase of vehicles and other machinery, may be obtained from private or government sources.

23. In 1992 an agricultural water subsidy programme was introduced to reduce the impact on farmers of considerable increases in the prices of water charged

by the Government. During 1993/94, £5,517 was spent on a water subsidy, which represents about 40,000 cubic metres of water being used for irrigation.

24. The St. Helena Growers' Cooperative Society (70 members in 1994) provides seeds to many individuals and farmers, in addition to the large quantity imported by them. The Agriculture and Forestry Department sold some 90,718 seedlings in 1992/93. In 1994 the Agriculture and Forestry Department produced around 32,000 vegetable seedlings, a considerably reduced number. That year seedlings were phased out because they are now produced by the private sector and by the farmers themselves. Some machinery (rotovators) and hand tools are available through private shopkeepers. Fertilizers and pesticides are supplied mainly by the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department.

25. Agricultural research is carried out on a range of agronomic subjects. The Prince Andrew School has an agricultural section, to which most of the agricultural education is confined.

26. The number of employees involved in agriculture and livestock services totalled 31, and the estimated expenditure during 1993/94 was £725,933.

27. The livestock raised in the Territory consists mainly of cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry. Livestock production totalled 1,589 in 1991/92 and 2,735 in 1992/93.

28. St. Helena has an environmental conservation programme aimed at conserving the endangered endemic species and the diversity of the habitats. The endemic plants which are unique to St. Helena and available nowhere else in the world are an important part of St. Helena's heritage. Concerted efforts are being made to ensure their survival and conservation. During 1993/94 a total of 1,321 of the various endemic plants were planted on the island.

E. Fisheries

29. The principal resource of the Territory is its fishing industry. Large tunas are available all year round. Skipjack and other species of tuna represent the greatest potential and are normally present from February to June. Mackerel and various demersal species, such as grouper, are also available all year round. Offshore resources associated with the two known seamounts within the 200-mile exclusive fishing zone were quantified by an offshore survey in 1985-1987.

30. The St. Helena Fisheries Corporation was established in November 1979 by an ordinance enacted by the Governor. Employment within the Corporation during 1993/94 consisted of 16 workers, excluding fishermen.

31. A Directorate of Fisheries was established in order to carry out government duties and responsibilities in the fisheries sector and to administer offshore licensing operations.

32. Local fish sales and export statistics are as follows:

Year	Local sales		Exports	
	Tons	Value (pounds sterling)	Tons	Value (pounds sterling)
1986/87	107.69	98 311	85.63	85 666
1987/88	117.71	110 670	77.12	78 120
1988/89	116.98	115 805	92.46	88 057
1989/90	109.80	121 522	154.54	128 124
1990/91	83.21	108 406	154.53	128 124
1991/92	88.91	118 782	26.66	38 399
1992/93	69.66	108 364	87.06	115 056
1993/94	68.93	107 516	168.85	189 593

33. The St. Helena Fisheries Corporation continued to explore export possibilities. A recently approved ODA development project aimed at further increasing export potential and improving the overall quality of fish through improved handling techniques is in progress.

F. Industries

34. There is no large-scale industry on St. Helena. All crafts are practised on a cottage-industry basis with technical, financial and marketing facilities provided by the Government through the Home Industries Section. There is no industrial development financed by outside investment.

G. Transport, communications and utilities

35. There is no airport or airstrip on St. Helena, and no railway. The only port is Jamestown, which provides good anchorage for ships of any size. The island's main link with the outside world continued to be the RMS St. Helena, which is owned and chartered by the St. Helena Shipping Company, Ltd., and which plies between Avonmouth in the United Kingdom and Cape Town in South Africa, calling at the Cape Verde islands and Ascension. The service receives an annual subsidy of some £2 million from the United Kingdom.

36. During 1993/94, a total of 409,683 cubic metres of treated and untreated water were supplied for domestic, commercial and agricultural purposes. The

36. During 1993/94, a total of 409,683 cubic metres of treated and untreated water were supplied for domestic, commercial and agricultural purposes. The supply of treated water remained at a reasonable standard. During the period under review the new water storage reservoir has been completed in Harpers Valley.

37. Electricity for the Territory is supplied by the Energy Division of the Public Works and Services Department. A total of 5,801,000 kilowatt-hours were generated in 1993/94. Electricity is generated by the Rupert's Valley power station, which has a total capacity of 2.712 MW. Fuel is imported in bulk and pumped ashore. In 1993/94 1,537,424 litres of fuel were consumed. There are 45 kilometres of high-voltage line carrying electricity to most of the Territory, and 112 distribution transformers are connected en route.

H. Banking and credit

38. The only bank is the Government Savings Bank, which does not offer the full range of normal commercial banking facilities. Limited credit facilities for house-building and home improvements are made available on very easy terms through the Government Housing Loans Board and the Government Savings Bank. Total deposits at the Government Savings Bank as of 31 March 1991 amounted to £3,455,379, compared with £3,320,504 during the previous year.

39. All financial transactions are ultimately channelled through London, and United Kingdom bank rates apply. No exchange controls operate on the island and, to the extent that overseas transactions are channelled through London, United Kingdom control measures apply. The deficit on the island's trading operations is, in effect, borne by the United Kingdom Treasury's grant-in-aid. Local currency in circulation as of 31 March 1994 was £3,148,747, comprising £2,796,467 in notes and £352,280 in coins.

I. International trade

40. St. Helena's main imports are food products and tobacco, motor spirits and fuel oil, animal feed, building materials, motor vehicles, machinery and spare parts. Its only exports are fish and handicrafts. Its main trading partners remain the United Kingdom and South Africa. Others include Brazil and Ascension.

IV. SOCIAL CONDITIONS

A. General

41. Living standards are reported to be improving on St. Helena as various development projects continue to employ both skilled and unskilled workers. Wages remitted to St. Helena by workers on Ascension and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) have enabled many families to build new homes or to improve the standard of existing ones. The rate of inflation continued to increase,

however. There has been a continued rise in the retail price index, which increased by 6 per cent in 1993/94.

42. According to the administering Power, there are no racial or cultural problems in the Territory, which consists of a homogeneous English-speaking community with a single education system.

B. Labour

43. The Government's labour policy is to create the maximum number of job opportunities and to provide as much training as capacity and funds permit. Following the collapse of the flax industry, the Government of St. Helena has become the major employer of labour in the Territory, with the Ascension island "User" and Falkland Islands (Malvinas) organizations fulfilling a vital role. According to the administering Power, 610 St. Helenians were employed as at March 1994 on Ascension, 227 on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and 39 in the United Kingdom, for tours of one to two years.

44. The territorial Government continued to give serious consideration to the restructuring of employment and decreed that it could not continue to guarantee employment for everyone. Community work is available for the unemployed. Those who are unable to obtain a position on this scheme and are willing and able to work can apply for unemployment allowances. Community employment is available to both men and women.

45. At the end of March 1994, there were 122 persons of both sexes under 60 years of age employed to do community work. Seasonal employment is provided for between 20 and 30 women in fish processing by the St. Helena Fisheries Corporation and St. Helena Canneries.

46. The principal categories of wage earners in St. Helena are agricultural labourers, skilled and general labourers, mechanics, engineers, motor drivers, building tradesmen, apprentices, fishermen and boatmen.

47. In 1993/94, average weekly rates of pay were £40.90 for government agricultural and general labourers and £47.62 for commercially hired labourers in the same category; £43 for government skilled labourers and £54.37 for skilled labourers in the commercial sector; and £22.18 for government and commercial sector apprentices.

48. The only registered labour organization is the St. Helena General Workers Union, which is affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and associated with the Trades Union Congress of the United Kingdom.

C. Public health

49. According to the administering Power, the general state of health of the population is good and its nutritional status is generally satisfactory. Public health is the responsibility of the Public Health Committee of the Legislative Council. The Chief Medical Officer administers the Public Health Department.

The Territory has one general hospital at Jamestown, a mental hospital at Half Tree Hollow and a handicap day centre at Longwood. There are six rural health clinics at strategic sites in the Territory, which are visited regularly by doctors and community nurses. Recurrent public health expenditure in 1993/94 was £1,154,675.

D. Social security and welfare

50. The Employment and Social Services Committee of the Legislative Council has general responsibility for the Employment and Social Services Department and is concerned with a wide range of matters. The annual budgetary provision for 1993/94 for social security and welfare was £955,250.

51. At the end of March 1994, 447 needy persons received income-related benefit payments in the form of cash issues varying from £17.95 to £33.20 per week. A Home Help Scheme was launched in 1981, and at the end of March 1994 employed 61 women. In addition, an unemployment allowance varying from £12.50 upwards is payable.

E. Education

52. Education is free. Attendance is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 15 years, but the power to exempt children over 15 years lies with the Education Committee. There are 12 schools in the Territory. The number of teachers in 1994 was 117, 4 of whom were St. Helenians. In 1993/94, school enrolment totalled 1,006 (995 indigenous). Illiteracy in the Territory was estimated at 1 per cent of the total population over 10 years of age.

53. Total expenditure on education in 1993/94 was £826,907.

V. DEPENDENCIES OF ST. HELENA

54. Information on dependencies of St. Helena, the island Tristan da Cunha for the period ending in 1993 and the island of Ascension for the period ending in 1988, is contained in previous working papers on St. Helena prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1152, paras. 48-70, and A/AC.109/1071, paras. 119-129). No further information on them has been received by the Secretariat since that time.

VI. FUTURE STATUS OF THE TERRITORY

Consideration by the General Assembly

55. In his statement before the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on 28 October 1994, 4/ in explanation of vote on the draft decision on the question of St. Helena, the representative of the United Kingdom stated that, as in previous years, the draft decision was unacceptable to his Government because it mentioned military facilities on Ascension, an island

which, although linked to St. Helena for administrative reasons, was not included in the Committee's agenda. His Government did not accept that the extremely limited military facilities on Ascension Island could be a source of concern to anyone, while suggestions that his Government should not involve St. Helena in acts of aggression or intervention against neighbouring States were even more incomprehensible. His Government's policy towards the British dependent Territories was pursued in strict conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

56. On 9 December 1994, the General Assembly adopted, by a recorded vote of 115 to 2 with 50 abstentions, decision 49/422 on the question of St. Helena.

Notes

1/ Information regarding St. Helena has been derived from published reports and from information transmitted to the Secretary-general by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations on 23 September 1994.

2/ United Kingdom, House of Lords, Official Report, Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), vol. 554, No. 84, 10 May 1994, p. WA 83.

3/ DP/CP/STH/2; see also DP/1993/SCPM/L.3/Add.13.

4/ A/49/C.4/SR.13, para. 63.